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*President Carter, Secretary Muskie*

# The OAS: Progress and Cooperation

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*Following are addresses by President Jimmy Carter and Secretary of State Edmund S. Muskie before the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, D.C., November 19, 1980.*

**PRESIDENT CARTER**

I speak to you today for the fifth time in an important forum in this hall and, despite considerable efforts to the contrary, I'm afraid also for the last time as President of the United States. I want to say how grateful I am for the privilege of working with all of you and the leaders of your nations. And I want to take a few minutes to assess what we have done together and to describe my own hopes for the future.

On my first visit to the Organization of American States, in April of 1977, I said that no single policy, no single slogan could encompass a region as diverse as ours. I spoke instead of certain principles, a belief in nonintervention and in the sovereignty of nations, a determination to work for human rights and for democracy, a common commitment to deal with global economic issues and to resolve regional political disputes. These principles have helped the United States make its contribution to the new and more balanced relationships that are emerging in our hemisphere.

After 4 years of practical experience, I'm more convinced than ever that the future we desire lies in recognizing yearnings that are common to individuals and to nations alike. As individuals the peoples of the Americas yearn for basic human rights. They desire personal liberty to be free from torture and arbitrary arrest; to participate in making the basic decisions that shape their own future; to have adequate food, health care, and education. And as part of the global community, every nation of the Americas has a desire and a right to help shape the future, not only of our own hemisphere but, indeed, the entire world.

Some would ignore or resist these treasured rights—the rights of individuals and the rights of nations. But the future lies with those who cherish them and who are willing to defend them. Let me speak briefly of the last 4 years.

Many here assisted in the negotiation and the ratification of the Panama Canal treaties. These treaties and their far-reaching impact will endure. They will endure because they are based on the mutual trust and the mutual respect that have been carefully, and sometimes painfully, forged by the people of a small nation and the people of a large nation. They will endure because they serve the interests of all who rely on the Panama Canal. They will endure because they epitomize the broadest possible commitment of my country to a new and a better relationship with the developing nations of the world. They will endure because the treaties serve the cause of peace.

Last month El Salvador and Honduras served the cause of harmony and progress resolving their decades-old border dispute. These two countries, working with former President Bustamante of

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Peru and with their own Secretary General, have earned the admiration and respect of all those who love peace.

The treaty of Tlatelolco, when completed, will forever ban nuclear weapons from Latin America. I'm proud to have signed protocol one of this treaty on behalf of the United States of America. It's imperative that the remaining nations of our hemisphere put aside their hesitation and join in this vital commitment to ban the spread of nuclear weapons and to set an example for other nations in other regions of the world.

In Nicaragua many of us have been working together to help that country heal its wounds. It's in the interest of all who care about freedom to help the Nicaraguan people chart a pluralistic course that ends bloodshed, respects human rights, and furthers democracy.

El Salvador continues to struggle against terrorists on the right who seek to restore an old tyranny and terrorists on the left who seek to create a new one. That struggle of theirs is ours as well. Their path, the peaceful path of stability and moderation, is precarious, but it's the only path that can lead to both liberty and justice. We must insist upon a strict policy of nonintervention as the people of these two nations design their own future.

For too long, the United States seemed wedded to the status quo—even when that meant a continuation of poverty, social injustice, and even political repression. That attitude betrayed my nation's dynamism and our faith and confidence in the future and that, thank God, has now been changed. We understand and support the necessity of peaceful and moderate political progress in Central America and elsewhere in this hemisphere.

Your governments, throughout the hemisphere, have also worked to improve the prospects for economic development. We've strengthened the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. We've reduced trade barriers by expanding generalized tariff preferences and eliminating the discriminatory provision against Venezuela and Ecuador. We've worked to stablize commodity prices by a Common Fund and individual commodity agreements on sugar and coffee and cocoa. Regional cooperation has been invigorated—in the Andean pact, with the Caribbean group, and, most dramatically, with Venezuelan-Mexican assistance for the Caribbean basin. Through my own personal participation, and through the influence of my country, we have worked to strengthen and to expand the beneficial influence of this Organization of American States.

**Progress on Human Rights**

As all of you know, the cause that has been closest to my own heart is the cause of human rights. I'm convinced that a new conscience has been awakened. That conscience serves a concept of human rights that is not unique to any country, nor even just to this hemisphere, but is universal. In this hemisphere, since 1977, 13 countries have ratified the embodiment of that concept—the American Convention on Human Rights. This has brought the convention into force and has created an inter-American court to judge human rights violations. In addition, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is more effective today than it was 4 years ago. It deserves our strongest continuing moral and financial support.

Today, no government in this hemisphere can expect silent assent from its neighbors if it tramples the rights of its own citizens. The costs of repression have increased but so have the benefits of respecting human rights. I pray that this progress will continue, although I know from experience that progress is not always easy as we defend human rights.

Some claim that Jimmy Carter elevated human rights and democracy on the inter-American agenda and that the agenda will change when I leave my office. They are wrong. Hemispheric support for human rights is a historic movement—a movement that has been recognized this year in the Nobel peace prize. I take pride in being part of that movement. The cause of human rights will be all the stronger if it remains at the service of humanity, rather than at the service of ideological or partisan ends, and if it condemns both terrorism and repression.

In the phrase "human rights," the "rights" are important. The "human" is *very* important. As a citizen of the Americas, I'm deeply encouraged by the trend toward greater democratization. I'm heartened that in many countries, thousands of people who were political prisoners just 4 years ago are now free. Those who see a contradiction between our security and our humanitarian interests forget that the basis for a secure and a stable society is the bond of trust between a government and its own people.

The future of our hemisphere is not to be found in authoritarianism that wears the mask of common consent nor totalitarianism that wears the mask of justice. Instead, let us find our future in the human face of democracy—the human voice of individual liberty and the human hand of economic development. If we build on the best of what we have begun, we can see a better time at the end of this decade. We can see a time when longstanding disputes like Belize, Bolivian access to the sea, and the Beagle Channel dispute between Argentina and Chile have been settled in a spirit of cooperation and justice. We can see a time when the treaty of Tlatelolco has come into force and other regions have followed the lead of Latin America in banning nuclear weapons. We can see a time when human rights are no longer threatened by the violence of either governments or terrorists and when every government responds to the will of its people, expressed through democratic institutions. We can see a time when nations have cooperated, in the OAS and elsewhere, to develop just and fair ways of dealing with the migration of people, a time when no nation disregards the immigration laws of its neighbor and many nations offer a haven to the few who still need such a place to dwell. And we can see a time when today's aspirations for greater economic development and cooperation have become living realities through common action inspired by this body and its experts.

Let me conclude on a personal note. My interest in Latin America and the Caribbean and in human rights and in democracy did not begin 4 years ago. And my interest will not end on January the 20th, next year. I will continue to speak out for the universal ideals which are embodied in our hearts and in the American Convention on Human Rights. I will continue to work with you—my friends— to make this hemisphere and the world more just, more secure, and more free.

**SECRETARY MUSKIE**

I'm delighted to join you in this historic forum—the world's first and oldest continuing regional association—and to underscore the remarks which President Carter made this morning. About one fact, I have no illusions: My country's recent election changes greatly the atmosphere in which you and I meet. We in the United States have an unpleasant metaphor for political officials who are on their way out of office: We call them "lame ducks." And I have observed, in more than two decades of political life, that people find it difficult to hear the call of the lame duck.

I do not intend to let this deter me today. Two decades in public life have taught me another lesson as well: that certain issues, certain realities, persist no matter what Administration is in office. The agenda that confronts you and me and our fellow citizens in this hemisphere is chosen by us only in part; for the most part, it is determined by a combination of long-term national interests and pressing current events.

Today I want to talk with you about certain great issues that were with us before this Administration took office and that will just as certainly shape the course of our relations in the future. I want to stress—as President Carter stressed this morning—the essential continuing U.S. policy.

### The Changed Environment

What is most obvious as we gather today is the profoundly changed environment in which our relations are conducted. President Carter touched this morning upon many of the significant and welcome changes which have marked the past 4 years: the Panama Canal treaties, the Latin American nuclear-weapons-free zone, the work of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. I would add to that list the emergence of independent states in the Caribbean, the vigorous spread of industrialization, the rise of several Spanish-speaking republics and of Brazil as major world forces.

All these developments have introduced new balance into inter-American affairs. They underscore that your countries are gaining real power to contribute to regional development and that we respect and welcome your contributions. And these developments, taken together, can be the foundation for improved cooperation among us all in the future. Several hopeful trends are already visible.

- Subregional integration has become a key focus for both growth and broader cooperation—from Central America to the Andean group and from the Caribbean to the River Plate Basin.
- Important initiatives have been launched by Mexico and Venezuela jointly, and separately by Trinidad and Tobago, to supply energy to their neighbors.

Yet this is only the beginning. During the next two decades—the last years of the 20th century—our successors will face changes even more sweeping than those we have witnessed over the past 20 years. The economic growth of Latin America over the past two decades has been impressive, and this is only the beginning. The potential for the rest of the century is just as promising. In fact, the *Global 2000 Report to the President*, recently prepared under the auspices of our government, projects that Latin America will be the fastest growing part of the world as we near the year 2000. This suggests that better regional approaches to development will be particularly important to our future cooperation.

Today, I want to emphasize the thought that better cooperation for development will depend largely on our ability to live by three fundamental principles that strongly influence the climate for cooperation: the prinicples of support for human rights; of nonintervention and collective security; and of peaceful settlement of disputes.

### Human Rights

Let me emphasize, as strongly as I know how, what President Carter said this morning: Support for human rights—economic and political, as well as individual, rights—is not a matter of transitory political emphasis for the United States; it is ingrained in our national life. The most consistent thread of belief in our history is the belief that governments should be the peoples' servant, not their master. For this simple but fundamental reason, I think it is safe to assert that the United States will continue to work to strengthen and increase respect for human rights as a fundamental norm of international cooperation.

All of us can be justifiably proud of our hemisphere's recent progress in this area. Those who would ignore, deny, or abuse individual rights are in retreat. The Inter-American Human Rights Commission deserves our special salute. Its documents and studies have begun to provide an invaluable and dispassionate basis for our joint consideration.

The collective rededication of the Americas to human rights is a major reason I look to the future of our region with optimism. Societies where basic human rights are respected are more stable and more productive, more confident and more creative. They make better friends and stronger allies. So I would assert that support for human rights is both a prerequisite for future cooperation and progress between us and a motive force toward success in all our mutual efforts.

### Nonintervention

The second fundamental principle for cooperation in the hemisphere is the principle of nonintervention. Effective international cooperation, particularly among states as richly varied as those of this hemisphere, is possible only if the rights of states are recognized. The very existence of this organization is due to men like Baltasar Brum and Carlos Saavedra Lamas, jurists whose wisdom helped develop the principle of nonintervention by one state in the internal affairs of another.

This principle is fundamental. As our hemisphere has become more politically diverse, differences of outlook have sometimes contributed to tensions among states. But our growing acceptance of political pluralism, both within and among countries, has proved important toward reducing such tensions.

We have explicitly committed ourselves through the Rio treaty to undertake collective action against the most blatant form of intervention—armed aggression. Other forms of intervention, however, can be just as damaging to national independence. The external provision of weapons, military training, or safehavens to armed insurgents is an insidious form of intervention—one all the more troubling for its indirection. Our regional organization needs to examine this pressing problem and devise ways to help the member states stop it.

### Peaceful Settlement

Development has few enemies greater than fratricidal conflict. Peacemaking efforts are the third key to the future development of our countries. For our part, the United States is irrevocably committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes. Over the last 2 years, the Panama Canal treaties have become a symbol of that commitment. The United States has made clear its willingness to deal with all nations, large and small, on a basis of mutual respect. Yesterday, in this hall, we honored a similar contribution to peace and development—the treaty of peace between El Salvador and Honduras. In both cases, this organization deserves major credit for helping to bring the concerned parties together in negotiations.

But even as we celebrate these forward steps, many other potentially disruptive territorial disputes remain unsettled in the hemisphere. Settling them peacefully must be a high priority concern for us all and for this organization in particular.

The principle of peaceful settlement of disputes could also be applied to certain other problems. President Carter this morning reaffirmed our country's commitment to the goal of the treaty of Tlatelolco, which calls for Latin America to be kept free of nuclear weapons. This

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treaty could serve as a precedent for similar arrangements to limit the dangers of conventional military technology.

We are convinced that balanced restraints on conventional weapons, whether negotiated regionally or subregionally, could reduce tensions, enhance the security of nations, and reaffirm our mutual commitment to peaceful development.

**Cooperation for Development**

Can we build a future of regional cooperation for economic development, based on fidelity to these fundamental principles? Let us be candid: The only honest answer possible is "perhaps." The dream of cooperative economic development is at once our hemisphere's brightest promise and the area of our greatest disappointment.

The OAS has contributed significantly to international law, to the Western Hemisphere's unique record of peacekeeping, and to our recent progress in strengthening support for human rights. But the plain truth is that we have done far too little through the OAS to capitalize on our joint potential for economic progress.

The moral imperative for action is clear, for ours is a hemisphere still marked by major inequalities among and within countries. Our basic principles simply cannot be fulfilled without more effective cooperation for economic development. And the practical imperative is as compelling as the moral one: Our combined efforts could dramatically improve the lives of all our citizens.

Yet too often, we have allowed our economic debates to focus almost exclusively on questions that divide us, losing sight of those vast and equally vital areas in which we are in agreement. The proposed special general assembly on development offers an opportunity to redirect regional thinking along constructive lines. This assembly should be held as soon as adequate preparations can be made. The "wise men's report," prepared for the joint working group, identifies many key areas where our cooperation can be strengthened.

We believe it is a good starting point. We are prepared to help wholeheartedly in developing and pursuing specific programs for the good of all our peoples. We also hope that, by concentrating on questions where early progress is possible, the special general assembly will build a foundation for cooperation on more difficult issues as well.

In conclusion, I would like to touch on a housekeeping item which ties into my opening remarks about the changed environment. I refer to the need to modernize the system of financing that was developed for this organization more than 30 years ago. The system should reflect the emerging new balances in the hemisphere. As a former legislator, I know the difficulties of negotiating financing arrangements. I know all too well the disputes and delays that can come with the process. The differences that separate on this issue are not so great. For the good of our organization, I urge that we delay no longer in reaching agreement on this issue.

In a valedictory statement like this one, I am not in a position to advance concrete new proposals. But I am freer to speak frankly. The days when one country could pretend to lead alone are gone; no country is now so strong that it can either dominate or ignore its neighbors. But if dominance by one power is undesirable, so is confusion among many. We have learned, sometimes painfully, how to coexist. Let us now learn how to cooperate more broadly and effectively. ■

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